

Fife Partnership Public Performance Report 2025-2026

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Executive Summary

As the Plan for Fife 2017–27 enters its final year, this report reflects on progress made during a period shaped by post-pandemic recovery and sustained system-wide pressures. Despite challenging conditions – including rising demand, shared systemic issues and the ongoing cost of living crisis – partners have increasingly worked more collaboratively, shifting towards joined-up and preventative approaches to improve long-term outcomes.

Progress in 2025/26 has been driven by a focus on people and place, alongside strengthened partnership working. There is a clear emphasis on prevention and early intervention, particularly in tackling poverty and supporting inclusive economic growth. Community-led services and targeted initiatives are helping to build financial resilience, improve health and wellbeing, and enable access to fair and sustainable employment – supporting people earlier and reducing crisis demand.

The importance of place has also become more pronounced. In late 2025 Fife was awarded £40 million from the UK Government Pride in Place funding which will ensure local voices are at the centre of decision making and will support revitalising town centres, improve public spaces and create lasting opportunities for residents. In addition to this, the housing emergency crisis has prompted a coordinated response, driving new approaches to housing supply and local environments with a focus on bringing empty homes back to life and buying off-shelf new build homes for families.

Strong partnership working remains central, with progress across poverty, economic and climate priorities demonstrating the value of shared leadership and coordinated effort. However, performance is mixed. While there have been improvements in areas such as income maximisation, employability and climate action, significant pressures persist – particularly in health inequalities, housing demand and economic disparities in parts of Mid-Fife. In addition, the financial, demand and infrastructure challenges can hinder the pace and scale of impact – reinforcing the need for more system-wide responses, rather than isolated interventions.

Overall, this report provides insight on what is working and where approaches still need to evolve. It underscores the need to deepen prevention, align resources, and strengthen partnership working across systems and it provides an evidence base to help shape Fife's ambitious plans for community planning and partnership delivery reform from 2027 onwards.

Economy and Community Wealth Building

Delivery Board updates

Progress updates

- The Life Chances progressive approach to recruitment provided 87 paid placements to people experiencing barriers to employment in 2025/26, 13% more than the previous year. Over half of participants (55%) went on to secure permanent employment.
- Business Gateway Fife (BGF) supported a total of 605 new business start-ups, 42 more than the previous year and the highest number of any local authority area in Scotland by a significant margin (the next highest was Glasgow City with 490 starts). It is expected that this support will have helped create 894 new full-time equivalent jobs; 51% of starts supported were female-led businesses.
- 96.6% of young people who left Fife schools in 2024/25 moved into a positive initial destination, the highest rate recorded and the first time Fife's rate was higher than the Scottish rate (95.7%).
- The Forth Green Freeport (FGF) secured full business case approval in December 2025; this unlocked £25m in seed capital funding to help prepare key sites within the FGF area for investors, including £13m to accelerate projects at Rosyth aimed at unlocking further investment.

Opportunities

- Strengthened regional partnership working will play a key role in tackling shared infrastructure, inequality, productivity and growth challenges across the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region and Tay Cities Region.
- Following the closure of the ethylene plant at Mossmorran, funding has been secured from the UK and Scottish Governments to support the plant's workforce, sub-contractors and supply chain and to secure a successful future for the site.
- The passing of the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Act 2026 by the Scottish Parliament will require local partners to prepare a community wealth building action plan. Scottish Government guidance will be produced to support the development of these plans. Fife will be considering how to make the most of this opportunity to strengthen the community wealth building approach.
- The Life Chances recruitment model adopted by some of Fife Council's Services, the NHS and third sector organisations, offers employers a progressive/innovative/proven way of both filling hard-to-fill jobs and giving people experiencing barriers to employment access to entry-level jobs.

Challenges

- There has been a reduction in the amount of funding for employability and economic development interventions in Fife from the UK Government's new regional development fund (the Local Growth Fund) and the funding and delivery of interventions to help people into work is fragmented with many different providers and programmes.
- A higher proportion of people in Fife are out of work due to long-term ill health compared to Scotland overall and rates of economic inactivity in the region are rising.
- The Mid-Fife economy continues to under-perform and strategic transport connections across and beyond Fife need accelerated investment to support growth.
- The number of registered private-sector enterprises in Fife fell for the fifth consecutive year, although employment in these businesses increased between 2024 and 2025 and the number of 'high growth' businesses rose to the highest number recorded.
- The economic outlook remains uncertain due to the impacts of the Middle East conflict, other geopolitical risks and trade policy uncertainties combined with weaknesses in demand and loosening labour markets.

Tackling Poverty and Preventing Crisis

Delivery Board updates

Progress 2025/26

- A refreshed child poverty strategy is being developed this year, in response to the need for more focus on long-term action to address poverty and the need to build on preventative work. Fife is using Public Health Scotland's (PHS) data and systems approach. The review started in February and has included stakeholder events involving council, voluntary sector and public health staff and consultation with volunteers with lived experience. The work will conclude this September and report to Cabinet as part of the refresh of the Plan for Fife.
- **Emerging priorities** from the Lived Experience work includes the need to reduce complexity and fragmentation in services, create a trusted single point of contact, tackle stigma and build trust in services, recognise the role of community and informal support and understand and address challenges around access to childcare, and specifically rural child childcare.
- **A significant body of work has been delivered since 2022** to mitigate the rising cost of living and progress the wider tackling poverty agenda. Evaluation and learning from this is also informing the direction of travel and priorities for the refreshed child poverty strategy. Initiatives such as Cash First have been impactful for people and remove the felt stigma sometimes associated with other forms of help. People have told us, however, that it's difficult to know what's available and that help can therefore be skewed toward those already familiar with provision.
- Benefit maximisation campaigns, help with fuel poverty and household support will continue with a £2.8m investment for 2026/27.
- Benefit take up campaigns helped increase people's incomes from benefits. - the Pension Age Disability Payment client financial gains of over £27million.

Tackling Poverty and Preventing Crisis

Delivery Board updates

Opportunities

- Lived Experience –work being led by the Poverty Alliance is providing an important understanding of the experiences of those with lived experience of poverty and is supporting the design of services. A Fife Lived Experience panel is being established to build this work starting in September.
- Partnership has been an important aspect of developing current poverty programmes enabling more sustainable approaches to delivery, for example through work with the national Fuel Bank or locally with Citizens Advice and Rights Fife, Greener Kirkcaldy and the Multi Bank (formerly Big Hoose).
- A £2.6m Cost of Living budget has been retained to continue help to mitigate the continued rises in food, fuel and cost of living.
- Use of data including the LIFT system (Low Income Family Tracker) is identifying households at risk of eviction, debt or fuel poverty before they reach crisis point supports this work and partnering with Lightning Reach is providing residents with a digital entry point to discover and access financial support from a range of charities and funds addressing debt, cost of energy etc
- A Fife Dignity Charter addressing the stigma associated with poverty has been developed with those with lived experience with the Poverty Alliance.

Challenges

- Resourcing of the poverty programmes has relied on temporary funding including carry forward of Covid support funding. Cost of Living challenges and demand pressures on existing provision, such as the Scottish Welfare Fund, remain high presenting challenges going forward.
- Large scale and targeted benefit maximisation campaigns have achieved financial gains of almost £36 million over the last 3 years and nearly 1500 staff and volunteers have been equipped to deliver first level advice and support supporting a 'No Wrong Door' approach. There continues to be a challenge getting people on the right benefits and getting their full entitlement to benefits .

Addressing the Climate Emergency

Delivery Board updates

Progress 2025/26

Delivery of the Climate Fife strategy has focused on three key areas: energy, resilience and community engagement.

- As part of the Big Energy Move, progress has centred on Fife's Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and the development of future heat network opportunities:
- A Dunfermline & Rosyth Energy Plan has been completed, exploring expansion of the Dunfermline Community Energy Scheme, integration with the wider energy system, and use of heat storage.
- Kirkcaldy Heat Network Feasibility Study (linked to the Town Centre Regeneration Programme) is nearing completion, assessing the potential to use wastewater heat to supply 41 non domestic buildings.
- Ongoing work with the Mining Remediation Authority (MRA) exploring mine water heat potential at Pitfirrane (near Crossford).
- Fife – A Place for Energy conference showcasing the opportunities for the energy transition in Fife, attended by over 150 delegates

The Big Resilience Move activity has strengthened climate adaptation and partnership working:

- A Coastal Monitoring Project has been launched using citizen science (CoastSnap) to track coastal change across Anstruther, Kirkcaldy, Leven to Lower Largo, and St Andrews.
- Fife's Rivers Programme has supported partnership activity across key rivers including the Eden, Leven and Forth
- Climate Resilience Delivery Programme is in development to inform Council and Fife-wide resilience opportunities, reducing risks and vulnerabilities.

The Big Community Move has seen the Fife Climate Youth Festival successfully engage young people from across Fife:

- The Fife Climate Youth Festival event brought together 180+ pupils, educators and partners to build awareness, confidence and climate action.
- The increase of Climate Literacy throughout all Fife Partnership member organisations will inform culture and decisions. 75 were accredited in 25/26.

Addressing the Climate Emergency

Delivery Board updates

Opportunities

- Progress a feasibility study and techno-economic model for mine water heat at Pitfirrane – one of the highest potential sites for mine water heat in Scotland and the UK.
- Further develop district heating opportunities in Kirkcaldy looking to connect 41 buildings, including partnership working, customer engagement, business case development and funding exploration.
- Deliver the Transforming Fife's Greenspace Project, enhancing biodiversity and community engagement across key towns. Advance Nature Finance Fife to attract external investment for large scale nature restoration.
- Pilot £150,000 community climate adaptation funding, enabling local groups to respond to impacts in their areas.
- WARP-it could be expanded through Fife Partnership members to build the user base of 477 members to further drive the current savings this pilot has enabled through the redistribution of resources:
 - 4 tonnes of waste diverted
 - 7.5 tCO₂e saved
 - £17,000 in avoided procurement costs.
- Engaging the network of Climate Champions across Fife Council, NHS Fife, Health & Social Care Partnership to inform and embed climate informed change. More than 150 managers in Fife Council are now mandated to become accredited in Climate Literacy by 2028.

Challenges

- Embedding climate change as a core strategic priority requires cultural change, leadership commitment and stronger integration across plans and partnerships.
- Delivering the energy transition will require significant electricity grid upgrades, with competing demands from heat, transport and wider development. In 2023 ~22% of energy consumed in Scotland was electricity. To achieve the energy transition this will need to significantly increase.
- Continued engagement with SPEN, the National Energy System Operator, Great British Energy and government is essential to ensure infrastructure and funding is ready for future demand.
- Embedding climate resilience in maintenance and improvement works is challenging accepted standards and practices, and budgets.
- Sharing data across and within organisations is challenging abilities to create place based climate resilience and mitigation.

Review of Ambitions Progress

Opportunities for All



Ambition	Progress
Fife has lower levels of poverty in line with national targets - Median weekly earnings % of children living in low-income households - Fuel poor and extreme fuel poor households % of children with health concerns at 27-30 months - Number of children meeting developmental milestones - Number of child protection re-registrations within 18 months	- The percentage of children in Fife living in low-income households shows an improving long-term trend. Relative child poverty has shown a reducing trend in Fife and Scotland since the introduction of the Scottish Child Payment - Median earnings in Fife continue to rise in line with national trends. - The proportion of children meeting developmental milestones shows a reducing long-term trend with numbers reducing since Covid, whilst child protection re-registrations within 18 months have reduced since the Covid period and shows an improving long-term trend.
Educational Attainment continues to improve for all groups - School attendance rates % of P1, P4 and P7 pupils achieving desired literacy and numeracy levels % of young people achieving SCQF level 5 literacy and numeracy levels by end of S4 - Pupils entering positive destination, and those from most deprived areas	- The percentage of pupils achieving expected Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy at P1, P4 and P7 has increased, although performance remains slightly below the Scottish average. - The proportion of school leavers entering positive destinations remains high and has continued to improve over time.
Fife has reduced levels of preventable ill health and premature mortality across all communities - Life expectancy in males and females - All cause premature mortality rate in under 75s	Life expectancy for both males and females in Fife continues to follow national trends, with females living longer than males.

Review of Ambitions Progress

Thriving Places



Ambition

Progress

Everyone has access to affordable housing options

- ⊗ Number of children experiencing homelessness or in temporary accommodation
- ⊗ % occupancy in temporary accommodation
- ⊗ Number of people rough sleeping
- ⊗ Number of Housing Option Plans completed via the Fife Housing Register website
- ⊗ Number of new affordable housing units delivered
- ⊗ Cumulative number of new affordable housing units delivered
- ⊗ Number of households homeless/potentially homeless
- ⊗ Homeless allocations
- ⊗ New tenancies sustained for more than one year by source of let

- The number of children experiencing temporary accommodation has increased, showing a worsening long-term trend. Homelessness allocations have risen in the last year and the number of households that are homeless or potentially homeless has increased slightly.
- While the number of new affordable housing units delivered has decreased, the cumulative total continues to increase year on year. Tenancy sustainment for more than one year shows an improving long-term trend.
- The number of people sleeping rough shows an improving long-term trend, with levels now lower than in 2024/25.
- The number of housing options plans completed via the Fife Housing Register (FHR) website has increased from the previous year but shows a declining long-term trend.

Fife's main town centres stand out as attractive places to live, work and visit

- ⊗ Retail vacancy rates (Kirkcaldy, Leven, Dunfermline, Glenrothes, Cowdenbeath and St. Andrews)

- Kirkcaldy currently has the highest retail vacancy rate, with increases also seen in Leven, Glenrothes and St Andrews. Dunfermline and Cowdenbeath show slight reductions compared to the previous year. Dunfermline and Glenrothes have high increases since Covid years, whilst other areas are down from this period.

All our communities benefit from low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour

- ⊗ Recorded crimes by Police Scotland (Fife Division)
- ⊗ Number of anti-social behaviour cases reported
- ⊗ % of reported anti-social behaviour cases which were resolved
- ⊗ Perception of prevalence of neighbourhood problems; vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property

- Recorded crimes in Fife decreased in 2025/26 compared to the previous year whilst nationally crimes increased.
- Reported anti-social behaviour cases continue to show a declining long-term trend, however, there was an increased compared to the previous year with a similar trend shown for Scotland. The percentage of cases reported which were resolved increased slightly from the previous year but remain below 2020/21 levels.

Review of Ambitions Progress

Thriving Places



Ambition

Every Community has access to high quality outdoor, cultural and leisure opportunities

- ⦿ Participation in physical activity
- ⦿ Satisfaction rates in museums and galleries, parks and open spaces, and leisure facilities
- ⦿ Attendance at all outdoor sport and leisure facilities
- ⦿ OnFife Theatre visitor numbers
- ⦿ Visits to/usage of Council funded or part-funded museums

Progress

- Satisfaction with sport and leisure facilities in Fife remains high.
- Attendance at outdoor sports and leisure facilities has returned to pre-Covid levels, despite a slight decrease in the last year.
- Library, theatre and museum visits continue to increase and show an improving long-term trend. This is likely due to post-pandemic recovery as well as increased tourism and investment.

Review of Ambitions Progress

Inclusive Growth and Jobs



Ambition

Progress

Economic Activity and Employment in Fife is improving faster than the rest of Scotland

- ⦿ New business start-ups supported by Business Gateway
- ⦿ New businesses surviving at least 3 years
- ⦿ Employment rate
- ⦿ Unemployment rate
- ⦿ Claimant count as a % of Working Age Population
- ⦿ Immediate available land as a % of total land allocated for employment purposes
- ⦿ Number of properties receiving Superfast Broadband
- ⦿ Number of businesses participating in Supplier Development Programme
- ⦿ Number of participants progressing from Fife Council funded/operated employability programmes into employment

- New business start-ups increased in the last year, and claimant count as a proportion of the working-age population has decreased, showing an improving long-term trend.
- The number of participants progressing from Fife Council into funded/operated employability programmes into employment decreased slightly in 2025/26 but shows an improving long-term trend.
- Employment levels remain stable, with 73.5% of residents in employment, slightly below the national average.
- Employment rate is down in 2025 compared to previous years whilst unemployment rate has increased slightly.

Review of Ambitions Progress

Inclusive Growth and Jobs



Ambition

Progress

Economic Activity and Employment in Mid-Fife (Glenrothes, Levenmouth, Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy) is catching up with the rest of Fife and Scotland (information gathered from Quarterly Labour Market Updates).

- ⦿ Reduced claimant rates in Mid-Fife (Kirkcaldy, Levenmouth, Cowdenbeath and Glenrothes)
- ⦿ Lower levels of poverty in Mid-Fife
- ⦿ More businesses in Mid-Fife
- ⦿ Improved skills level in Mid-Fife
- ⦿ Increased number of apprenticeships in mid-Fife

- The number and rate of people claiming out-of-work benefits in each of the Mid-Fife areas have fallen since the Covid-19 pandemic but remain higher than other parts of Fife
- The percentage of children (0-15 years) in relative poverty in Mid-Fife areas remains higher than the rest of Fife.
- Although business densities in Mid-Fife areas remain lower than those in other parts of Fife, Business Gateway Fife supported 322 new businesses to start-up in the area in 2025/26, over 53% of the start-ups supported in Fife
- Mid-Fife areas remain lower than the rest of Fife for the percentage of 16-19 year olds in education, training or employment during the period 2020-2025.

Fife has year on year increase in visitor numbers and tourism spend

- ⦿ Total number of visitors to Fife
- ⦿ Total full-time employment supported by Tourism in Fife
- ⦿ Economic impact of Tourism in Fife

- Full-time employment supported by tourism, total visitor numbers and economic impact of tourism all show increasing trends since post-Covid recovery.

Review of Ambitions Progress

Community-Led Services



Ambition	Progress
Our public services are more joined up and acting 'one step sooner' ⊙ Number of Crisis Grants ⊙ Spend on Crisis Grants ⊙ Number of Community Care Grants ⊙ Spend on Community Care Grants	● The number of Crisis Grants has reduced year on year since 2022/23. ● The number of Community Care Grants has decreased significantly since Covid years. ● While the number of grants shows an improving long-term trend, total spend on grants has increased since 2020/21.
Fife's communities and individuals are more involved in local decision making and in helping to plan and deliver local services ⊙ % of people agreeing they can influence decisions and in 20% most deprived	● Data continues to increase over time in people agreeing that they can influence decisions in their local area. This is likely due to continued community engagement and opportunities for public consultation in local decision-making.

Addressing the Climate Emergency



Ambition	Progress
Fife has lower levels of carbon emissions in line with national targets ⊙ Carbon Dioxide emissions area wide within scope of LA per capita ⊙ Area Wide Emissions ⊙ Total Fife Council Carbon Footprint – tCO₂e (tonnes of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent)	● Long-term trends indicate continued improvement in area wide emissions and Fife Council carbon footprint, with Carbon Dioxide emissions per capita showing a general downward trend.

Fife Partnership Public Performance Report 2025-26

If you would like any further information about this report or the work of the Fife Partnership please visit the Fife Council Community Portal at our.fife.scot or email: fife.partnership@fife.gov.uk



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